

Navigating Relationship Safety During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Safety Alert: Computer use can be monitored and it is impossible to completely clear your browser history. If you are afraid your internet usage might be monitored, call **the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 or 800-787-3224 en Español.**

The Department of Defense is committed to the safety and well-being of service members, their partners and families 24/7/365. The national emergency spurred by COVID-19 is no exception. To tackle the threat, public health leaders are calling on all of us to modify our behaviors, change our daily routines, and make sacrifices to curb the outbreak.

However, some recommendations, like social distancing and self-isolating at home, may be especially challenging for individuals who do not feel safe in their relationships with their spouse or partner, particularly if they live with that person. For some relationships, the added stress brought on by the pandemic, which could include financial implications, may also bring out unhealthy or even abusive behaviors.

Support is always available

No matter what your personal situation is, the military community has resources to support you. Whether you're questioning your partner's behavior towards you or looking for ways to manage your safety and maintain your boundaries at home, help is available and you are not alone.

Take time for self-care

To the extent possible, make time for yourself with daily rituals that provide you with mental and emotional space, even joy. Making your well-being a priority can help you build the resilience you need to guide yourself (and your children, if you have them) through this challenging period.

Stay connected with friends and family

While you are removed from your social network and community due to quarantine, be sure to keep in touch via email, text, phone, or other means. Maintaining these connections can boost your mental and emotional health, and also help to keep you safe.

It is especially important to stay in touch with loved ones while you are at home with an abusive partner. Check in with them every day to let them know you are okay. Make sure they know how to reach you in an emergency. You may also want to develop a code word or phrase that indicates you are in danger, so they discreetly know when to send help.

Be advised, however, that some abusers may monitor computer and cell phone activity.

[Learn tips for cell phone safety »](#)

Create a safety plan

Even if unhealthy behaviors in your relationship have not escalated to violence or abuse, it is a good idea to develop strategies for finding space to be away from your partner. A safety plan is a personalized checklist that helps you to identify ways to maintain your welfare, [and your children's](#), if you need time and space apart from your spouse or partner.

Victim advocates at your installation's Family Advocacy Program are available by phone to help you map out safe places to go, if needed, like a friend or family member's house. If you already have a safety plan, consider calling the Family Advocacy Program to connect with a victim advocate who can help adapt it to your current situation.

[Find contact information for your Family Advocacy Program and Victim Advocate Services »](#)

The National Domestic Violence Hotline also offers information on [safety plans specific to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Get help in an emergency

Yes, it is important to self-quarantine during this time to the extent possible. But be assured that frontline professionals, including law enforcement, are available to help you in a crisis.

Call 911 if you are in immediate danger, or if your partner or spouse has threatened you, your children, or someone you know. If you are on a military installation, call your military law enforcement office.

If you are feeling panicked, stressed, anxious or depressed about your relationship while you remain at home, support and counseling is available.

- Contact Military OneSource any time to arrange for non-medical counseling.
- Support staff at your installation's Family Advocacy Program is just a phone call away.
- You can connect 24/7 with an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline by calling 800-799-7233, or chat online at thehotline.org.

It is natural for all relationships to feel tested during an emergency or crisis. If your spouse or partner has made you feel unsafe or afraid, help is available through the Family Advocacy Program. [Speak to a victim advocate](#) to explore next steps, or call or chat with the National Domestic Violence Hotline 24/7, at 800-799-7233 or thehotline.org.

[Navigating Relationships Safely During COVID 19 - Military One Source](#)

KEY MESSAGES:

- When it comes to domestic abuse, everyone's situation is different – it can happen to anyone and is not their fault. Whatever the circumstances, a call to your installation's Family Advocacy Program or Military OneSource can link you to resources and support.
- Preventing abuse in the military community starts with promoting an understanding of what safe and healthy relationships look like, and providing ways for individuals to take steps such as setting boundaries and seeking help in stressful times, and knowing what support is available in a crisis.
- FAP is committed to supporting service members and their families impacted by domestic abuse through victim advocacy and crisis intervention. If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic abuse, and you are not sure what to do, make a call to one of the victim advocates on your installation.
- If you are concerned about your safety and need immediate support, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 or live chat with an advocate at thehotline.org.
- If a friend or family member is experiencing domestic abuse, do not pressure them to leave. Instead, tell them you are there for them and that you can help them plan for their safety or seek outside support when they are ready. Ask them how they prefer stay in touch and support and believe them.
- In times of increased isolation, make yourself available for scheduled check-ins with loved ones who may feel unsafe at home – whether it be by phone, text or social media – so you will know if they're OK or if you need to call for help.

IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER PLEASE CALL 911

For help with domestic violence, please refer to the resources below by county:

Macomb: Turning Point 24-hour Crisis Line: 586-463-6990 Turning Point's mission is to provide programs and resources that enable victims/survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault to regain control of their lives.

Oakland: HAVEN's Residential Program HAVEN's residential program is Oakland County's only 24-hour emergency shelter exclusively for domestic violence and sexual assault victims and their children. If you need a place to go, call the Crisis and Support Line at 248-334-1274, or chat live with us online.

Wayne: First Step 24-hour Help Line (734) 722-6800. The mission of First Step is to eliminate both domestic and sexual violence and to provide comprehensive services to individuals and families impacted by these crimes.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1- 800-799-7233

Pandora Brown, LCSW, LMSW
Army Community Service
Family Advocacy Program Manager
U.S. Army Garrison-Detroit Arsenal